

Gehazi: Missing the Mark (Goal)



SABBATH—DECEMBER 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 39:4–6; 2 Kings 4; 2 Kings 5; 2 Kings 8:1–6; Jeremiah 9:23, 24; John 13:1–17; 1 Timothy 6:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “You must follow him [God]. You must have respect for him. Keep his commands. Obey him. Serve him. Remain true to him” (Deuteronomy 13:4, NIV).

GEHAZI WAS A SERVANT BUT NOT JUST ANY SERVANT. He was the servant of one of the greatest prophets (special messengers for God) in the history of Israel: Elisha. Elisha was called by the Lord to be an assistant (helper) to the prophet Elijah. And this helped Elisha prepare for his own prophetic ministry (work for God) (1 Kings 19:16). For many years, Elisha served Elijah. He listened and studied so he could understand what it meant to be a prophet. Suddenly, Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind of fire (2 Kings 2:11). Then Elisha's time had come. The ministry of Elisha was not as dramatic as that of Elijah. But Elisha gave wonderful, lifelong service for the good of the people.

As his servant, Gehazi had a wonderful opportunity (chance) to be closely connected with the great prophet Elisha. It is hard to imagine all the things he could have learned and seen in those years that he worked with the prophet.

Gehazi had so much promise and so many great opportunities. But he became a terrible failure. The story of Gehazi is the story of someone who fails to reach his goal and who becomes unable to tell the difference between what is important and what is not. As we read this story, we must remember how important it is for us to learn from his mistakes.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 12**SERVANTHOOD (Genesis 24:2–4)**

Write a short job description for a servant from each of these verses: Genesis 24:2–4; Genesis 39:4–6; Luke 14:17; Luke 17:7, 8; Acts 2:18.

Being a servant means that one puts aside his or her own wants, wishes, and comfort. Instead, he or she becomes fully involved in the life of someone else. A servant is there to assist (help) the master in carrying out the master's plans, wishes, and activities. Sometimes being a servant means carrying messages, going somewhere with someone, doing something for the person, and doing simple jobs that need to be done. At other times, it means taking care of money and households.

Gehazi was the servant of the prophet Elisha. Being a servant to a prophet was a special honor. It involved more than just common work. It was a type of apprenticeship.¹ Elisha himself served as Elijah's servant (1 Kings 19:19–21). The job of a prophet depended on how he was called by God. But it would seem that this special time of serving with Elijah helped the would-be prophet Elisha develop his faith and trust in God.

By serving his master Elijah, Elisha would have learned to put himself aside and serve others. This would have proved to be the best kind of training for any ministry. We have no record of Gehazi's calling. But we will read about the opportunities he was given.

This servant idea is not only an Old Testament idea. Jesus said that willingness to be a servant was necessary for anyone to be a leader in the church (Mark 9:35).

Read John 13:1–17. How do these verses show the connection between leadership and servanthood?

The disciples (followers) have been with Jesus for three years. They have learned from His teachings. They have even shared in His healing ministry. But they are not ready to go out as ambassadors² for God. They had enjoyed fellowship with Jesus. But they still were not prepared to put themselves aside and humbly serve each other.

How do we learn to be humble enough to serve others? How do we learn to serve others without an attitude (feeling) of trying to get rewards for ourselves?

1. apprenticeship—a period of training.

2. ambassadors—representatives sent from one country to another to win its friendship and trust.



The woman, in deep sadness, grabs hold of Elisha's feet.

MONDAY—DECEMBER 13

LEARNING FIRSTHAND (2 Kings 4:8–17)

A good teacher teaches by example and gives the student plenty of opportunities to use what he or she is learning. Elisha was this type of teacher.

Read the story in 2 Kings 4:8–17. What is Gehazi's work in the story? What opportunities is Elisha giving Gehazi?

The story of the woman of Shunem follows another miracle³ involving a woman. In 2 Kings 4:1–7, Elisha helps a widow get rid of her debts⁴ and keep her two sons from being sold as slaves. Now Elisha is on his way to Shunem. Remember that in Bible times women were considered second-class citizens. So, it is strange that the writer of this story gives a married woman such importance. The name of her husband is not given. All that we know is that the woman asks him about the building of

the guest room. We also know that he is old but still fit enough to supervise the harvesting of his fields. In the first part of the story, Elisha puts Gehazi to work. Elisha sends Gehazi to call the woman and thank her for him. Elisha also asks Gehazi his opinion and follows his advice. Gehazi shows that he is sensitive to the real needs of the woman. Elisha gives Gehazi the chance to perform a miracle. Within a year, the miracle child is born.

Read 2 Kings 4:18–31. What change in attitude (feeling) do we find in Gehazi that is different from what we read about in the earlier story?

The miracle child is now a young boy. Gehazi still serves Elisha. But Gehazi seems to be less sensitive than he was before. The woman arrives and walks past Gehazi to grab hold of the feet of Elisha. But Gehazi tries to push her away. Gehazi thinks that the Shunammite woman is being rude. By grabbing hold of Elisha, she breaks the social rules of the time (verses 25–27). Gehazi fails to understand that the woman is in deep depression (sadness). But Elisha does.

It sometimes is easy to be so self-centered that we are not sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. We all have been on both ends of this. How can you learn to be more sensitive to the feelings and needs of others? Also, how can you learn

3. miracle—an unusual or wonderful event that is believed to be caused by the power of God.

4. debts—money or service owed to someone else.

to “overlook” the fact that others may not be sensitive to you?

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 14

A QUESTION OF FAITH (2 Kings 5:1–19)

Read 2 Kings 5:1–19 and answer the following questions:

- Why did the king of Israel act as he did? Was his action reasonable or not reasonable? What was he afraid was happening?
- Why did Naaman react the way he did to Elisha’s command to him? What good reasons did he have for his action? How did his feeling show how the king of Israel felt about the letter?
- Read verse 12. What kind of reasoning is the captain using here? What mistake is he making?
- How does Naaman speak of himself in front of Elisha after the miracle? What does this say about him?
- Why do you think Elisha refused to take any money from the captain? Why would it be important for Elisha not to take any money?
- Read carefully verses 17–19. What is going on here? How do we understand what Naaman is asking for and what answer Elisha is giving him?



Elisha refused to take money from the captain.

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 15

GEHAZI’S FALL (2 Kings 5:20–27)

With our modern thinking, it is hard to understand why people in the Bible did what they did at times, especially when they had seen so many miracles. The wonderful healing of Naaman happened right in front of Gehazi. He saw both the power of God and the actions of Elisha, his master. Elisha refused to take any money from the captain. We would think that this would be enough to humble Gehazi before God and man. But, clearly, it was not.



The Bible is full of warnings against the love of money and the dangers of earthly things.

Read 2 Kings 5:20–27. According to these verses, how did Gehazi make excuses for his actions? What little bit of prejudice⁵ is shown in the thoughts of Gehazi?

It is strange that Gehazi swears to himself by the living God and then goes off to deceive (lie). Does he think that the living God does not see him? This story clearly shows the power of our own sinful hearts to deceive us.

Meanwhile, Naaman is very generous with gifts for Gehazi. But he probably has some questions, especially when his two servants return to tell him about Gehazi's strange behavior. Gehazi has let his greed (selfishness) get in the way of the witness that Elisha wants to give to this new convert (believer).

Of course, in the end, the same God who did miracles showed Elisha the truth of what Gehazi did. That quickly, the life and ministry of Gehazi were ruined.

It is hard to fully understand the terrible hold that the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10) can have on us. What examples can you think of where money led to the ruin of someone? How can we learn to protect ourselves from such a dangerous temptation (desire to sin)?

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 16

LIVING ON LEFTOVERS (2 Kings 8:1–6)



Gehazi's life is a strong warning against the power of our own sinful hearts to deceive us.

We last hear of Gehazi in 2 Kings 8:1–6. What do we find the ex-servant of Elisha doing?

Many years have passed since the great miracle of the raising of the Shunammite's son. The skin disease Gehazi has must not be too bad. This is because we now find Gehazi in the royal court. Gehazi, the former servant of Elisha, is talking about what has been. He is bragging about Elisha and his miracles. As he does this, Gehazi must be thinking of his own importance by his connection to Elisha.

What relationship is really important? Why? Read Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

And so, Gehazi fades from history. The sad part of the story is that Gehazi could have been doing God's work. He could have learned from Elisha. He could have been the next important prophet or perhaps a

5. prejudice—an unfair feeling of dislike for a person or group because of race, sex, religion, or other reasons.

leader and teacher in the schools of the prophets. Now all he can do is speak about the good old days when he worked with Elisha. Gehazi could have helped make history. But now all he can do is live in the past.

We need to remember how God has dealt with us in the past. But at the same time we need to be careful not to spend so much time thinking about the past that we forget to live correctly in the present. How do we create the right balance here? How can thinking too much about the past influence⁶ our walk with the Lord today?

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “‘A dishonest witness will be punished. And those who pour out [tell] lies will not go free.’ Proverbs 19:5, Nlrv. Men may think to hide their evil deeds from human eyes. But they cannot fool God. ‘Nothing God created is hidden from Him. His eyes see everything. He will hold us accountable [responsible] for everything we do.’ Hebrews 4:13, Nlrv. Gehazi thought to deceive Elisha. But God showed His prophet the words that Gehazi had spoken to Naaman. And the prophet knew every detail of the scene between the two men.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 252.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What are some warning signs that money is becoming more important in our lives than God? How can we learn to use money and not let it use us? How do tithing⁷ and giving offerings change the power of money over our lives?
- ② As a class, go over your answer to Thursday’s question. What are the things that are really important in life? Why is it so easy to lose track of what is really important?
- ③ What reasons might have led Gehazi to think that he could get away with his evil plan? He knew God was there. He had seen miracles happen. But he tried to deceive (fool) his master. Perhaps Gehazi had done almost the same thing before and gotten away with it. Perhaps, in his own mind, he made “excuses” for his actions. We do not know. But we do know that it is easy to deceive ourselves. What are some ways we can learn that can help keep us from fooling ourselves?
- ④ Go back to 2 Kings 5:17–19. In reading these verses, what lessons can we learn from the favor Naaman asked of Elisha about bowing down in the house of Rimmon?
- ⑤ What are some useful ways you can serve others?

6. influence—to affect or change someone or something in an indirect but usually important way.

7. tithing—giving back to God one-tenth of what one earns.